

By: Watson, Lucio

S.B. No. 542

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to alternative dispute resolution methods regarding educational services for students with disabilities, including individualized education program facilitation.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Subchapter A, Chapter 29, Education Code, is amended by adding Sections 29.019 and 29.020 to read as follows:

Sec. 29.019. INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM FACILITATION. (a) The agency shall provide information to parents regarding individualized education program facilitation as an alternative dispute resolution method that may be used to avoid a potential dispute between a school district and a parent of a student with a disability. A district that chooses to use individualized education program facilitation shall provide information to parents regarding individualized education program facilitation. The information:

(1) must be included with other information provided to the parent of a student with a disability, although it may be provided as a separate document; and

(2) may be provided in a written or electronic format.

(b) Information provided by the agency under this section must indicate that individualized education program facilitation is an alternative dispute resolution method that some districts may choose to provide.

1        (c) If a school district chooses to offer individualized  
2 education program facilitation as an alternative dispute  
3 resolution method:

4            (1) the district may determine whether to use  
5 independent contractors, district employees, or other qualified  
6 individuals as facilitators;

7            (2) the information provided by the district under  
8 this section must include a description of any applicable  
9 procedures for requesting the facilitation; and

10           (3) the facilitation must be provided at no cost to a  
11 parent.

12        (d) The use of any alternative dispute resolution method,  
13 including individualized education program facilitation, must be  
14 voluntary on the part of the participants, and the use or  
15 availability of any such method may not in any manner be used to  
16 deny or delay the right to pursue a special education complaint,  
17 mediation, or due process hearing in accordance with federal law.

18        (e) Nothing in this section prohibits a school district from  
19 using individualized education program facilitation as the  
20 district's preferred method of conducting initial and annual  
21 admission, review, and dismissal committee meetings.

22        (f) The commissioner shall adopt rules necessary to  
23 implement this section.

24        Sec. 29.020. INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM FACILITATION  
25 PROJECT. (a) The agency shall develop rules in accordance with  
26 this section applicable to the administration of a state  
27 individualized education program facilitation project. The

1 program shall include the provision of an independent  
2 individualized education program facilitator to facilitate an  
3 admission, review, and dismissal committee meeting with parties who  
4 are in a dispute about decisions relating to the provision of a free  
5 appropriate public education to a student with a disability.  
6 Facilitation implemented under the project must comply with rules  
7 developed under this subsection.

8 (b) The rules must include:

9 (1) a definition of independent individualized  
10 education program facilitation;

11 (2) forms and procedures for requesting, conducting,  
12 and evaluating independent individualized education program  
13 facilitation;

14 (3) training, knowledge, experience, and performance  
15 requirements for independent facilitators; and

16 (4) conditions required to be met in order for the  
17 agency to provide individualized education program facilitation at  
18 no cost to the parties.

19 (c) If the commissioner determines that adequate funding is  
20 available, the commissioner may authorize the use of federal funds  
21 to implement the individualized education program facilitation  
22 project in accordance with this section.

23 (d) The commissioner shall adopt rules necessary to  
24 implement this section.

25 SECTION 2. This Act applies beginning with the 2014-2015  
26 school year.

27 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives

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1 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as  
2 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this  
3 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this  
4 Act takes effect September 1, 2013.